

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-06 ISO-00 CU-04 IO-03 USIA-12 DRC-01 RSC-01

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R 261545Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 996

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 10251

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL SY US IT

SUBJECT: RETURN OF ROMAN MOSAIC TO SYRIA

REF: STATE 188549

1. WE HAVE DISCUSSED REFTEL WITH RESPONSIBLE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL WHO REMARKED THAT THIS WAS FIRST MINISTRY HAD HEARD OF PROBLEM. HE SAID THAT BEFORE INSTRUCTING CARDILLI AS REQUESTED IN REFTEL, MINISTRY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE FULLER DETAILS ON MATTER, SPECIFICALLY SARG ATTITUDE TOWARD PAYING SHIPPING EXPENSES.

2. OFFICIAL SUGGESTED THAT DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER FINDING SOME WAY OF PAYING FOR SHIPMENT OF MOSAIC AS GESTURE TOWARD IMPROVED US-SYRIAN RELATIONS. HE EXPRESSED PERSONAL VIEW THAT SINCE SARG INJURED PARTY, IT WOULD BE AT LEAST UNGRACIOUS TO REQUEST THAT IT PAY SHIPPONG CHARGES FOR ITS STOLEN PROPERTY. WE RESPONDED THAT WE WOULD REPORT OFFICIAL'S VIEWS TO DEPARTMENT.

3. ONLY INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY ON STOLEN MOSAIC IS COPY OF JULY 3 LETTER FROM CARDILLI TO DJEREJIAN OF NEA/ARN. ENCLOSURE TO LETTER IS TRANSLATION OF SYRIAN NEWSPAPER ARTICLE WHICH STATES THAT SYRIAN DG OF ANTIQUITIES REFUSED TO PAY SHIPPING OR INSURANCE EXPENSES FOR RETURN OF MOSAIC. PRIOR TO RECEIPT STATE REFTEL WE HAD NOT REPEAT NOT DISCUSSED MATTER
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WITH FOREIGN MINSTRY, AND APPARENTLY CARDILLI DID NOT REPEAT

NOT REPORT PROBLEM TO ROME.

4. EMBASSY'S EXPERIENCE WITH RETURNING STOLEN ITALIAN ART OBJECTS HAS BEEN THAT SHIPPING CHARGES HAVE BEEN PAID BY ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, BUT PRIMARILY TO EXPEDITE RETURN SINCE IT APPEARS LIABILITY FOR RETURN COULD ACCRUE TO ORIGINAL IMPORTER OF STOLEN PROPERTY, ALTHOUGH THIS COULD REQUIRE LENGTHY COURT ACTION.

5. WE BELIEVE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL'S SUGGESTION THAT DEPARTMENT FIND SOME WAY OF PICKING UP SHIPPING TAB AS GOOD WILL GESTURE TOWARD SARG IS WORTH CONSIDERATION. WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE ANY FURTHER DETAILS ON MATTER AVAILABLE TO DEPARTMENT FOR INFORMATION OF FOREIGN MINISTRY. PLEASE ADVISE. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 SEP 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ROME10251
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS VOLPE
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973099/aaaaager.tel
Line Count: 75
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 188549
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Sep-2001 by rowellE0>; APPROVED <20-Nov-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RETURN OF ROMAN MOSAIC TO SYRIA
TAGS: SCUL, SY, US, IT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005